

The Mysteries in Hellenistic astrology

the original article and some 2014 reviews

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This article was inspired by the lectures presented by Robert Schmidt during the Vll Astrological Conclave in Cumberland, July 2007.

Robert Schmidt together with Robert Hand and Robert Zoller created the memorable project Hindsight. In the beginning of 1990 they began the translation of Greek and Latin astrological sources to English. The translation was an essential tool in order that the current astrologers could recover and recall the great Art and the nobility of the ancient astrology.

It's impossible to discuss Hellenistic Astrology disregarding some important philosophical concepts. The Greeks were really great philosophers, and they had a quite complex insight on the cosmos and human existence.

Sometimes it's difficult to understand their way of thinking, but if we are able to leave aside the analytic mind just like we did when we relinquished the Cartesian point of view in order to become astrologers, believing that we can find more in the occult than in the cold way of measuring things, we will be able to envision the true meaning of the Greek thinking.

We will see some quite unusual and at times weird concepts: there are many clues in Hellenistic astrology devised to force you into thinking. Hence, be prepared for unsettling ideas.

Some of them, according to Robert Schmidt´s information, are related to esoteric aspects that are being revealed through recently discovered ancient Tablets containing new ways of dealing with the meaning of houses. One of these Tablets ends with the following words:

"He, Trasyllus, describes how Trimegistus said"

The Mystery of the Houses

The houses are divided in angular houses, pos ascensional and and cadents from the angle. The first ones are called “pivots” by the Greeks and they work like hinges around which everything revolves.

The post ascentional houses have the function of supporting the house before they are those through which you enter a cadent house. The cadent house, a house between worlds, on the other hand has the function of destroying the previous house, and is like a bridge to the next one.

From where the division of houses came from? The Greeks were the first to describe the Hõroskopos, the exact point of the Ascendant and this happened in the second century BC when Hypsicles of Alexandria discovered the mathematical method for calculating it. At this time appeared the first chart with the respective horoskopo.

Vettius Valens, in his Anthology written in the 2nd century AC, used whole signs and also topic division based in Porphyry.

The Hõroskopo is the point from where we depart to describe the other houses. For the Greeks, however, any point can be used as Hõroskopos. The chart can depart from a LOT, for example, (the Fortune Lot , the Spirit Lot, the Eros Lot, etc) or even any other house can became a Hõroskopos, a point of departure, the first house to analyze the others under a specific subject. For example, if the issue is a financial problem, we can depart from the Lot of Fortune or from the Second House, or use the system of derivative houses.

The detailed description of this virtuosity in the Hellenist astrology is well described in the introduction by Robert Hand to the Book ll of Vettius Valens Anthology

In spite of the determination of the exact position of the Hõroskopos, the Greeks always used whole signs instead of dynamic houses, even if we have testimonies of the topic division as well.

What means to use the whole sign systm of houses? Let’s assume the Ascendant to be at 22º of Cancer. The first house initiates in the beginning of Cancer and goes as far as its last degree. A planet at 29º of Cancer would be considered in the first house.

But we haven’t discussed any mysteries yet...so far we just described some astrological Hellenist statements.

We know the terrestrial houses are 12 and that they have a meaning, according to their aspects relative to the Ascendant.

The Eight topic houses system coexisted with the current 12 houses system at that time.

The Greeks had two words for life:

“Zoo”: the physical existence and “Bios”, the life you live, the livelihood.

And you live your life in Places that the Greeks named Topos or Houses as we name them nowadays.

The “Hõroskopos ” is the first house and represents “Zoo”, the physical life. This life is supported by the activity of the Second House. The issue of the Second House is a Bios´s issue.

Now we will see the explanation of life in a different way.

According to the new material being translated, the life that we live is shared by the 12th, the 10th and the 8th houses.

This is really a mystery and a weird one, because what kind of life you can live in the 8th house, the place of death if your life is restricted to being alive?

In the 10th house, the statement is perfectly understandable because in the 10th is where you live and act without restriction your adulthood.

And the 12th house, a cadent house, “apoclima”, between worlds?! You are not alive yet, this is prior to our existence! How can we understand such a weird statement?

I invite you to empty your mind and listen carefully:

The 12th house has a meaning of preparation: at the same time it’s the apoclima, a decline, a turn backwards from the first, but it is the house where you choose your Bios, where you’re not living your life, but choosing the one that you will have to live.

Greek astrology was not reincarnationist but used a lot of Plato’s theory, and Plato believed in reincarnation.

According to this theory, after the 12th we have the birth of the body, the First House.

As soon we live the three houses after the 12th and go directly to the end of the Second House, which supports the First, we find the abyss of the Third House. It is an initiation and we have to jump over it. At this moment we don’t go to the Third, but to the 9th house: it’s the death of our childhood: the 9th is the 8th of the Second House.

The first return of Saturn occurs at this time and it represent the good-bye to the first youth, in order to enter the adulthood. This event occurs at about thirty years of age: we reach our maturity.

In the 9th, a cadent house, we prepare for our prime, we get subsidies, guides and learning to achieve our acts in life. We reach the 10th house , the Praxis, prepared to act in the public life, having children included, matter of the 10th for the Greeks.

The 11th house is the patronage, the friends and institutions that support our public life and position.

Additional 30 years are spent in the 9th, 10th and 11th houses. It is the period between the 30 and 60 years of age.

Once you lived the 11th house it is time for your second initiation: -you'll have to jump to the 6th House, the illnesses of the body, which will prepare you for death, which will happen in the 7th House. Indeed, the setting place makes opposition to the Ascendant.

The next thirty years of the native life will revolve around this new theme: the destruction of life.

Back to our initial theme: what kind of activity can we have in the 8th house, also called "lethargy" and when our body is supposed to be dead?

In this house we have to drink the water of forgetfulness, to forget the life we lived and our Bios. This is the activity of the 8th: to forget.

So, the 12th House is a preparation for the Bios. We get a Zoo, a body, and we begin to live our life going straight to the end of the Second House, where our first thirty years of life are spent.

After this rite of passage that occurs -not by coincidence at the same time we have the first Saturn´s return -there is a jump from youth to adulthood, where we will live the next thirty years of our life, in the prime of our adulthood and living the good houses, the 9th, 10th and 11th. Next, we have the second Saturn's return, another jump, this time to a worse place, the illness of the 6th House which will prepare us for death.

Let's suppose that someone lived more than 90 years. This person would jump to the 8th of the 8th: i.e. from the 8th house to the Third (a between-worlds house), cadent, preparing for the 4th, the Hades, and after this to the 5th, the fame after death.

In the Hellenistic texts, action is Praxis, and Praxis is matter of the 10th house, but also of the Third, because Praxis means practice but also means to transverse spaces and to travel, matters of the Third: the travel to Hades.

From another side, siblings are matter of the Third, but the ruler of the Third, Mercury, is the same ruler of the 12th in the Thema Mundi [iii], Mercury, means that brothers and sisters are those who came for the same purposes and with the same agenda. Our brothers are those who came from the same symbolical womb.

The Third House, between worlds in the Thema Mundi, is represented by the double sign of Virgo [ii], disposed by Mercury, who is Psycho pomp.

What does the soul have to do in the Third house? It´s suppose to travel to the underworld, to the Hades.

The 4th house is Nemesis' house, the reward, the justice, the place where the soul will be weighed. The Fourth House has its own Lot, the Lot of Nemesis or Justice, based on the relationship between the Lot of Fortune and Saturn.

Nemesis becomes a contributing cause of fate coming from underground sources.

In the underworld´s house the soul will be weighed and evaluated until it reaches the 5th house and again, jump to the 12th, where a new beginning will be prepared.

In the 12th House, after the soul passes by the place of the Necessity it is ready to live another life and another Bios. Hermes said that the Bios was supported by the second house and for the Praxis, i.e. the 10th House, but besides this, for the Third House that is a place of travel and dreams.

The Greeks had a very consistent way of seeing the houses.

We notice that they went clockwise and counterclockwise, and the use of derivative houses was a rule. Besides this, each house could be used as the "horoskopus" for the matter it represented.

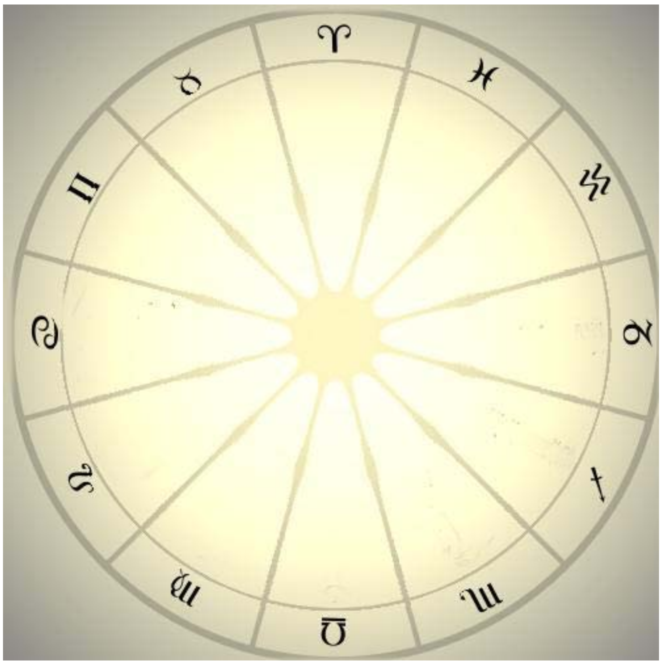
So, if the Fourth House has to do with Hades, the place where the soul is weighed, it has to do with both parents as well, and the First House is the 10th of the Fourth: we are the result of our parent's action. A house has many meanings, as we can see, depending on its relation of the other houses.

In the Thema Mundi, our next topic, we will see that the Fourth House has to do with Saturn and Nemesis, because the Fourth House is Libra in the Thema Mundi, where Saturn exalts.

The 5th house is the posthumous fame, good or bad, and represents what will happen to our body or ashes after death. At the same time, the 5th house has to do with the legacy from the parents.

The meaning of the houses is mixed and it is important to consider everything that was said, not discarding the news just because they are news. The ideas are very consistent, and for sure they demanded a lot of dedication from the ancients sages of Greece ,trying to figure out the human destiny facing the large cycles and initiations of the life that ends with death, at least regarding to our Zoo and present by Bios.

The Thema Mundi



We will take a first tour in the underlying philosophy of the Hellenistic astrology. We went through a place where the meaning of the houses is virtual, and each of them can represent the most varied kind of things, including the journey of the soul to the earth and to the underworld.

To better explain the philosophical issue and the underlying Mystery of the astrological houses, we will use the Thema Mundi, a hypothetical chart on the birth of the world.

Such a chart is very ancient and it was first used in Persia, with the story of the first man of the world, sung in poems for the great Firdausi's Shahnama (900AC to 100DC), who wrote his poetic work unifying the Persian history in one single language. This book is based on the story of the Creation of the World according to Zaratustra (6th century BC). Keyumars, the first man, is named Gayomard in the sacred Zoroastrian text, the Avesta.

Gayomard should have the Thema Mundi as his birth chart, having been born in a moment when all the planets were exalted. According to the myth, he was 30 years old when he died.

The Greeks had contact with astrology as it was practiced by Babylonians and Persians, using the same Thema Mundi to construct their own philosophical and astrological understanding.

As we can see the Thema has the rising sign in Cancer and the MC in Aries, which

seems coherent, since Cancer is the universal symbol of generation. The choice was not random. In the origins of the Persian civilization, astronomers realized that in the sky in Cancer´s place, instead of constellations and stars there was a vast black hole, without stars. For some scholars, the round and big shape of this hole resembled a large crab or a turtle, from which the idea of the Crab would come. Also the word “to cut” in Arcadian has some similarity to crab, and “cut” should mean the division between two sides of the sky, coinciding with the summer solstice in Cancer divind the year.

The MC in Aries is quite appropriate, also, as the MC is where we develop our actions to be seen in the world. The 7th House, that has the signification of Death for opposing to the Ascendant, shows the sign of Capricorn and the IC , Hades or underworld, is represented by Libra.

The Greeks explained the exaltations of the planets through geometrical drawings. The trigons and hexagons drawn by the houses regarding the Rising Sign of the Thema Mundi were regions where planets had their exaltations. Likewise, the houses considered good for the Zoo had benefic planets in exaltation.

So, the 9th, the 10th and the 11th Houses are considered good places because they “look” so to the horoskopus.

In the Rising Sign of the Thema Mundi, Cancer, Jupiter, the most benefic planet has exaltation. In the 9th in the Thema Mundi, where is the sign of Fishes, which makes a trigon to the horoskopos happens the exaltation of Venus, the second benefic.

The Fifth House, in the Thema Mundi, is Scorpio and it has no planet in exaltation in this sign. Though it makes a trigon with the Horoskopo, Scorpio is the fall of the Moon, ruler of the Rising Sign in the Thema Mundi. Nothing can have exaltation in the fall of the "horoskopo"´s ruler, it was said.

The two planets that exalt in Pisces and Cancer have to do with the Zoo, the maintenance of life.

The 10th house is also beneficial to the Ascendant because it is a place where the Bios works in the world and completes itself: in the Thema Mundi, we have the sign of Aries, where the Sun exalts linking the action with visibility and fame.

If the Sun exalts in the 10th, the other luminary, the Moon, exalts in the 11th, making a hexagon with the Ascendant. In the Thema Mundi we have the Sign of Taurus, giving support to the 10th house and making a sextile with the ASC.

In order of importance, after the first "pivot", i.e. after the First House, we have the 10th house and after the Seventh, Finally we have the 4th House.

The 7th house is an important house since it is in a "pivot", but it is not good for the native. As a matter of fact, it makes an opposition to the native´s life,

represented by the horoskos and because of this, Mars has his exaltation there, in the sign of Capricorn of the Thema Mundi: it is the house from where injury comes.
The 7th house, however, even being a not good house for life is not as bad as the 4th House, the Hades, the worse of the “pivot” houses, so the exaltation of the biggest malefic, Saturn, is in the 4th of the Thema Mundi, Libra, where “Bios” and Zoo are still destroyed. Saturn and Libra weigh the souls in the house of Nemesis, the distribution of the justice.

To Mercury is given the exaltation in Virgo, the Third House, since it’s a house that makes a sextile with the ASC (using the hexagonal figure)

The third house is the least bad of the cadent houses, and is named the Goddes´s house.

The 9th is the best of the cadent houses, named the House of God.

With these considerations we hope to have given a small idea of the astrological Greek philosophy. There are more articles to come up on this subject.

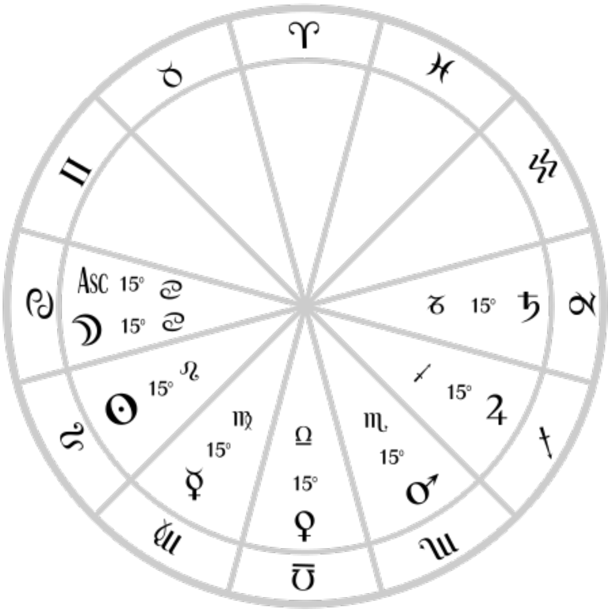
The Cadent Houses and the Thema Mundi as Inexhaustible Source of Astrological Knowledge

Clélia Romano

There are articles not worthing to review . Even their eventual failures must remain , otherwise we can delete some that was written when our memory was fresh with astrological immersion in some important phase of our life . This is the case, just now. However it is important add further clarification that occurs after meditation on certain topics and our own astrological maturity .

One of the things I could not help to clarify is how much of egyptien philosophy in embedded on all the abpve explanation: we can´t forg that the sp called Greek astrology was praticed in Egypt even if transmitted in Greek language.

The egyptien were much more interested in the soul and its destiny after life than in encarnation, as Nick Campion made clear in the workshop that he gave in Rio de Janeiro in 2011.



Traditional astrologers as Chris Brennan and Benjamin Dykes have offered a good hypothesis explaining the position of the planets in the Thema Mundi in the very house where they have exaltation.

My goal here is only to cover certain gaps relating especially to the cadent houses , which are difficult to understand especially why they are ruled by certain planets .

The first houses in each quarter of the chart are called " pivots " or points that act as key points of life .

The houses hereinafter called post- ascensional houses have the function of giving support to the previous ones. The following are called the cadent houses or between worlds , and their function is to serve as a bridge to the next house , the next pivot.

In this sense we can say that the Twelve House is a house where we choose our incarnate life , where we choose our " bios" .

Notice that both the 12 House and the 3rd House are ruled by Mercury. For this reason they have important similarities . At first, Mercury forms a bridge between the missing and the existing bios, " chooses " next life that will have to be lived and this is quite near in its meaning of a thinking planet.

Mercury is also a psychopomp planet, mediating between what is above and what is below.

Thus , in the third house , it also makes his role , as it was rumored that the third house was related to travel and dreams and also to the brethren, children of the same womb , the symbolic womb represented by the Twelve House .

But we can´t wonder why the 6th House, a house of diseases , has Jupiter as ruler , just as the 9th : apparently this is not consistent with the maleficient sense of the house .

My idea is the following: the 6th House is the 9th house from the 10th, which means praxis, everything that we do. In this case , Jupiter , wisdom , prepares to face the 7th House, which is the 10th House from the 10th. It is not a coincidence that the 6th House is ruled by the same lord of the 9th House in Thema Mundi. This may well be related to the fact that Jupiter represents the wise actions necessary to accomplish our partnership.

Moreover and more relevant, is the fact that the 7th House is a dangerous one, being ruled in the Thema Mundi by the malefic Saturn and having the lesser malefic in exaltation there. Saturn rules also the 8th House , which is a house giving its support to the 7th, the enemy of life, in other words, representing death. So what kills is the 7th House and the the 8th House is death already happened .

It seems to me that in the sixth house we need to prepare ourselves spiritually for death. First , we get sick , we learn that our life and health is a miracle , we prepare well or not so well , developing acceptance or another way to look wisely to what is or was the course of our life and its end, waiting for us .

It needs wisdom to make a good use of the 6th house! This is my explanation on why Jupiter has rulership of the 6th House on the Thema Mundi .

The End